

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 HONG K 12927 01 OF 02 130934Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00

PA-01 ICA-11 SP-02 /037 W

-----104462 131118Z /14

R 130842Z SEP 78

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO USLO PEKING

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 3597

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 HONG KONG 12927

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CH

SUBJECT: CHINESE ONCE AGAIN BEAT A DEAD HORSE

REF: PEKING 2792 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: IN RESPONSE TO REFTEL REQUEST, THIS MESSAGE SKETCHES THE HISTORY OF THE CONTRVERSIAL SHANSI OPERA "THREE VISITS TO PACK PEAK" AND SPECULATES ABOUT WHY THIS PLAY IS NOW BEING REVIVED. THE PLAY WAS ORIGINALLY ATTACKED BY CHIANG CHING AND HER RADICAL CHOROTS IN 1974 FOR ITS ABSENCE OF REFERENCE TO CLASS CONFLICT, FIR ITS ALLEGED HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION WITH LIU SHAO-CH'I AND HIS WIFE WANG KUANG-MEI, AND FOR ITS PURPORTED ALLEGORICAL CRITICSM OF MAO'S GREAT LEAP FORWARD. IT APPEARS THAT THE CURRENT REVIVAL IS CONNECTED WITH MOVES UNDER WAY TO BRING OUT OF THE SHADOWS SYMBOLS ALSO ECLIPSED DURING THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION (CR). ALONG WITH POLITICAL FIGURES SUCH AS LIU, WANG AND PENG CHEN WHO WERE HISTORICALLY ASSOCIATED WITH THESE CR TARGETS. END SUMMARY.

1. THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE SHANSI OPERA "THREE VISITS TO PEACH PEAK" IS A COMPLICATED AND INTRICATE EXAMPLE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 HONG K 12927 01 OF 02 130934Z

OF CHINESE USE OF LITERARY AND HISTORICAL ALLUSION FOR POLITICAL ENDS. THE PUBLICATION IN RECENT DAYS OF SEVERAL ARTICLES IN THE PRC PRESS REVIVING THIS PLAY AND CASTIGATING THE GANG OF FOUR FOR ITS SUPPRESSION IN 1974 IS THE LATEST EPISODE IN A LONG ROUND OF DEBATE CONCERNING THE PLAY'S POLITICAL INTENT.

2. THE PLAY IN ITS PRESENT FORM WAS FIRST ATTACKED IN A PEOPLE'S DAILY ARTICLE ON FEBRUARY 28, 1974, A MONTH AFTER IT WAS WIDELY PERFORMED DURING A NORTH CHINA LITERATURE AND ARTS FESTIVAL HELD UNDER CHIANG CHING'S SPONSORSHIP. THE FEBRUARY 28 ARTICLE, SIGNED WITH THE PSEUDONYM CH'U LAN -- A PLAY ON WORDS WHICH INDICATED THE ARTICLE'S AUTHOR OR AUTHORS WROTE ON BEHALF OF CHIANG CH'ING -- ADDUCED SEVERAL PIECES OF EVIDENCE TO PROVE THAT THE PLAY WAS A SYMBOL OF COUNTER-REVOLUTION. CH'U LAN NOTED THAT THE PLAY CONCERNED THE PARTY SECRETARY OF A BRIGADE WHICH SOLD A FATALLY SICK HORSE TO ANOTHER BRIGADE, AND WHO WENT THREE TIMES TO THE OFFENDED BRIGADE TO APOLOGIZE AND MAKE AMENDS WHEN SHE LEARNED WHAT HAD HAPPENED. ACCORDING TO CH'U LAN, THE PLAY'S PLOT WAS IRREPARABLY FLAWED BECAUSE IT MERELY PRAISED RIGHTEOUS, GOODY, GOODY MEN OF THE SORT PRODUCED BY THE OLD, PRE-REVOLUTIONARY CONFUCIAN SOCIETY AND UTTERLY LACKED REFERENCE TO CLASS STRUGGLE, A REQUISITE OF ALL REVOLUTIONARY MODEL PLAYS PRODUCED UNDER CHIANG CH'ING'S AEGIS.

3. MUCH MORE DAMNINGLY, CH'U LAN'S ARTICLE CHARGED THAT THE PLAY WAS A CLEVER ATTEMPT TO REVIVE THE MEMORY OF THE DISGRACED LIU SHAO-CH'I AND HIS WIFE WANG KUANG-MEI. THE ARTICLE CLAIMED THAT IN 1964, CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 HONG K 12927 01 OF 02 130934Z

PRESUMABLY UNDER LIU'S GUIDANCE, WANG KUANG-MEI PROMOTED A MODEL AGRICULTURAL BRIGADE IN FUNING COUNTY, HOPEI (THE "PEACH GARDEN" BRIGADE) IN OPPOSITION TO MAO'S PROMOTION OF HIS QUITE DIFFERENT RURAL CONCEPTS (TACHAI). ACCORDING TO THE FEBRUARY 28, 1974 ARTICLE, EVEN AFTER MAO SPECIFICALLY REJECTED THE "PEACH GARDEN EXPERIENCE" IN JANUARY 1965, WANG KUANG-MEI CONTINUED TO SUPPORT THE "PEACH GARDEN" BRIGADE BY SENDING A POLITICAL WORK TEAM AND EVEN PRESENTING A HORSE (SIC) TO THE BRIGADE.

4. AGAIN, ACCORDING TO CH'U LAN, IN THE SUMMER OF 1965, WHEN LIU SHAO-CH'I WAS STILL IN CONTROL OF THE PARTY CENTER, THE PARTY PROPAGANDA DEPARTMENT PRODUCED A STORY ENTITLED "THREE VISITS TO MULBERRY GARDEN TO BUY A HORSE." THE SCENE WAS SET IN FUNING COUNTY (THE LOCATION OF THE "PEACH GARDEN" BRIGADE) AND THE STORY WAS WIDELY PROPAGATED IN PICTORIAL SERIES, DOCUMENTARY FILMS, SONGS AND PLAYS.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 HONG K 12927 02 OF 02 130942Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00
PA-01 ICA-11 SP-02 /037 W
-----104626 131005Z /14

R 130842Z SEP 78
FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG
TO USLO PEKING
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 3598
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 HONG KONG 12927

IN JANUARY 1966 A THEATER TROUPE IN SHANSI PROVINCE PRODUCED A PLAY ON THE SAME THEME, CHANGING THE TITLE OF THEIR WORK TO "THREE VISITS TO PEACH GARDEN." THIS PLAY WAS CRITICIZED AND SUPPRESSED DURING THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION; YET EIGHT YEARS LATER IT REAPPEARED UNDER THE TITLE "THREE VISITS TO PEACH PEAK" WITH THE STORY, ORIGINALLY PLACED IN 1965, NOW SET IN 1959. WHEN CRITICIZED AFTER THE APPEARANCE OF THE FEBRUARY 28, 1974 ARTICLE, THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PLAY'S RESURRECTION DENIED IT HAD ANY DEEP POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE.

5. ACCORDING TO THE CH'U LAN'S ARTICLE, IT WAS NO ACCIDENT THAT THE REVIVED PLAY WAS SET IN 1959. RATHER THE NEW DATE WAS A CLEVER ATTEMPT TO ATTACK MAO'S GREAT LEAP FORWARD BY LITERARY AND HISTORICAL ALLUSION. REPORTEDLY LIU HAD CRITICIZED THE GREAT LEAP AS "TOO VIOLENT AND CAUSING TROUBLE," AND THE HORSE'S SICKNESS AND ULTIMATE DEATH IN "THREE VISITS TO PEACH GARDEN" WAS DUE TO VIOLENT HANDLING. SINCE THE HORSE DIED IN 1959, THE PEOPLE'S DAILY ADDUCED THAT ITS DEATH WAS BEING LAID TO THE EXCESSES OF THE GREAT LEAP, ERGO THE PLAY WAS A SLAP AT MAO.
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 HONG K 12927 02 OF 02 130942Z

FURTHERMORE, THE ARTICLE CONTINUED, JUST AS THE

FAMOUS PLAY "THE DISMISSAL OF HAI JUI" WAS AN ALLEGORICAL CALL FOR THE REHABILITATION OF P'ENG TEH-HUAI (THE MARSHAL WHO IN 1959 CRITICIZED MAO FOR PUSHING THE COMMUNE AND GREAT LEAP MOVEMENTS TOO FAR AND FAST), "THREE VISITS TO PEACH GARDEN" WAS AN ALLEGORICAL CALL FOR THE REHABILITATION OF LIU SHAO-CH'I.

6. COMMENT: THE CURRENT REVIVAL OF "THREE VISITS TO PEACH PEAK" IS ALMOST CERTAINLY RELATED TO MOVES UNDERWAY TO BRING OUT OF THE SHADOWS OTHER CULTURAL SYMBOLS ALSO ECLIPSED DURING THE CR, ALONG WITH POLITICAL FIGURES SUCH AS LIU, WANG AND PENG CHEN WHO WERE HISTORICALLY ASSOCIATED WITH THESE CR TARGETS. FOR INSTANCE, A KWANGMING DAILY ARTICLE ON AUGUST 15 FOR THE FIRST TIME IN OVER A DECADE PRAISED THE RIGHTEOUS MING OFFICIAL HAI JUI, ABOUT WHOM FORMER PEKING VICE MAYOR AND PENG CHEN CONFIDANT WU HAN HAD WRITTEN PLAYS AND ARTICLES IN THE EARLY 1960'S. AS SUGGESTED BY CH'U LAN'S 1974 ARTICLE, THERE IS AN OBVIOUS SIMILARITY BETWEEN THE "THREE VISITS TO PEACH PEAK" AND WU HAN'S "THE DISMISSAL OF HAI JUI," BOTH EXTOLLING RIGHTEOUS OFFICIALS WHO CARED DEEPLY FOR THE MASSES -- OBVIOUS ALLEGORICAL ALLUSIONS TO P'ENG TEH-HUAI, LIU SHAO-CH'I AND OTHER OFFICIALS WHO STOOD UP TO MAO DURING THE GREAT LEAP.

7. THE REVIVAL NOW OF THESE CULTURAL SYMBOLS IS A NECESSARY CONDITION FOR THE REHABILITATION OF "RIGHTEOUS," BUT STILL CONTROVERSIAL FIGURES ASSOCIATED WITH THESE SYMBOLS SUCH AS WANG KUANG-MEI AND PENG CHEN. CONVERSELY, REMAINING CR-TAINTED

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 HONG K 12927 02 OF 02 130942Z

OFFICIALS SUCH AS PEKING MAYOR AND POLITBURO MEMBER WU TEH (DIRECTOR OF THE STATE COUNCIL'S CULTURE GROUP DURING THE 1974 CAMPAIGN AGAINST "THREE VISITS TO PEACH PEAK") CAN ONLY BE HARMED BY THE CURRENT REVIVALIST TREND.
SHOESMITH

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 sep 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978HONGK12927
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780372-0174
Format: TEL
From: HONG KONG
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780973/aaaacial.tel
Line Count: 214
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 99d1df51-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 PEKING 2792
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1456474
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CHINESE ONCE AGAIN BEAT A DEAD HORSE
TAGS: PINT, CH
To: PEKING
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/99d1df51-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014